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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

SURPRISE: THE KOREAN CASE STUDY

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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18 May 1992

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Faculty Research Advisor Date

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED	1b RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS
2 SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY	3 DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF REPORT: DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: Approved for Public Release; distribution is unlimited.
2b DECLASSIFICATION / DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE	
4 PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	5 MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)
6a NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION: OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT / 6b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable): C	7a NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code): NAVAL WAR COLLEGE NEWPORT, R.I. 02841	7b ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)
8a NAME OF FUNDING / SPONSORING ORGANIZATION / 8b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9 PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	10 SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS: PROGRAM ELEMENT NO. / PROJECT NO / TASK NO / WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO

11 TITLE (Include Security Classification)

SURPRISE: THE KOREAN CASE STUDY (U)

12 PERSONAL AUTHOR(S)
PAUL ODELL, CAPTAIN, USN

13a TYPE OF REPORT	13b TIME COVERED	14 DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day)	15 PAGE COUNT
FINAL	FROM _____ TO _____	1992, MAY, 18	36

16 SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

17 COSATI CODES		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP

18 SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)
SURPRISE, KOREA, OPERATIONS, STRATEGY, DECEPTION MISPERCEPTION, RISK, CHINA, TRUMAN, MACARTHUR

19 ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)

Clearly military surprise is among the greatest dangers a country can face. Despite a knowledge of this danger, responsible leaders have failed to prevent surprise at the start of most wars. To help explain this apparent contradiction and to suggest explanation why surprise occurs, a general theory of surprise is developed. This theory is developed by synthesizing existing literature on surprise with a prior knowledge of governmental and military organizations. The major strategic and operational surprises of the Korean War are examined in the context of this theory. The theory of surprise can be distilled into six key concepts that are generally illustrated by the surprises of Korea. This analysis points toward both the complexity of surprise and its likelihood for occurrence in the future. Recommendations for dealing with this problem at the strategic/political and operational levels are discussed and include: an increased awareness of surprise theory through education; a more rigid approach toward decision making in foriegn policy; appropriate military doctrine; mobile and flexible forces.

20 DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT	21 ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION
☑ UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED ☐ SAME AS RPT ☐ DTIC USERS	UNCLASSIFIED
22a NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL: CHAIRMAN, OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT	22b TELEPHONE (Include Area Code): 841-3414 / 22c OFFICE SYMBOL: C

DD FORM 1473, 84 MAR — 83 APR edition may be used until exhausted; All other editions are obsolete — SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

Abstract of

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Clearly military surprise is among the greatest dangers a country can face. Despite a knowledge of this danger, responsible leaders have failed to prevent surprise at the start of most wars. To help explain this apparent contradiction and to suggest explanations why surprise occurs, a general theory of surprise is developed. This theory is developed by synthesizing existing literature on surprise with a prior knowledge of governmental and military organizations. The major strategic and operational surprises of the Korean War are examined in the context of this theory. The theory of surprise can be distilled into six key concepts that are generally illustrated by the surprises of Korea. This analysis points toward both the complexity of surprise and its likelihood for occurrence in the future. Recommendations for dealing with this problem at the strategic/political and operational levels are discussed and include: an increased awareness of surprise theory through education; a more rigid approach toward decision making in foreign policy; appropriate military doctrine; mobile and flexible forces.

PREFACE

When I decided to write this paper on surprise, I originally intended to look at the events of the Korean War, develop some conclusions or general theories on surprise, and see what these conclusions might mean for the future. However, after I had read extensively on the Korean War, I examined material on the theory of surprise and found that most of the authors agreed, in general, on the important elements of surprise. I further discovered that most of the already written theory fit the Korean surprises well. Consequently I changed the structure of this paper to first synthesize the key elements of surprise theory as written by the experts, illustrate this theory, and then conclude what this means for the future.

To limit this paper to the prescribed length I have done two things. First, I have focused only on certain events in the first few months of the Korean War and not on a total history of this three year war. Some excellent history has been written on this war, particularly David Rees' Korea: The Limited War. A general knowledge of this period would certainly help keep the events I focused on in proper perspective.

Secondly, I have intentionally written only very generally on deception. Deception is a key element of surprise theory and that relationship is described. However, deception is also a large and complex subject requiring an entire research paper of its own to fully address, as I did in 1983 in my College of Naval

Command and Staff research paper. Again, some excellent writing exists on deception. Of note is Barton Whaley's extensive work, "Stratagem, Deception and Surprise in War."

As I considered the theory of surprise and examined the surprises of Korea, I discovered that surprise at the strategic level and surprise at the operational level both verified the general theory. Additionally, these levels of surprise became further linked as surprises at one level of war generally resulted in consequenses at the other level also.

Finally, a word on my recommendations is in order. Most of these recommendations require development in depth taking full advantage of surprise theory and its implications. Within the scope of this paper, however, recommendations will be listed and briefly described only.

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SURPRISE: THE KOREAN CASE STUDY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND THESIS

Introduction. Governmental and military leaders and planners all seem to understand that military surprise is among the greatest dangers a country can face. Yet, history shows most major wars have begun with a sudden, largely unexpected attack. An examination of this paradox of surprise, its consequences, and implications for the future are the subjects of this paper.

The method used for this discussion will be to first develop and describe, in detail, a theory of surprise that can explain its essence; that is, why and how it occurs, the conditions that will favor surprise, and the effects of military surprise. This theory will be developed both logically from a knowledge of governmental and military organizations, how they function, and their history, and from the synthesis of a detailed body of literature by experts on the theory of surprise.

Once developed, this theory will provide the basis for examination of the operational and strategic surprises of the first months of the Korean War, the Korean Case. The Korean War provides an excellent example for the examination of the surprise theory as three major surprises occurred in the first six months of war. These surprises had major and lasting implications for the entire three year war.

Finally, the implications of the surprise theory and example of the Korean Case will provide the basis for conclusions and recommendations regarding military surprise and the future. The questions to be examined in this context are: Is military surprise a problem for today and for the future? If so, what can be done to deal with this problem?

Thesis. There are a group of theoretical explanations that help us better understand the role of surprise in war. As the case is with every theory in the social sciences, this theory will not exactly fit every instance of military surprise, but it can help to explain why surprise occurred and its effects. This basic theory generally fits the surprises of the Korean Case.

Additionally, the examination of both this basic theory of surprise, and specific instances of surprise, the Korean Case, indicates that the circumstances and conditions that made surprise possible and even likely in the past will be present and repeated in the future. Efforts to deal with military surprise in the future should focus on avoiding surprise. At the same time since surprise frequently cannot be avoided, measures must be taken that will help mitigate its effects. Finally, as the spectacular results achieved by the U.S. Military through surprise attack in Iraq verify, offensive employment and exploitation of surprise as a key principle of war should continue to be part of planning and doctrine.

CHAPTER II

THE THEORY OF SURPRISE

An excellent body of work exists on the theory of surprise. Most of this work is rather consistent in its method, using historical case studies to draw and support conclusions on the phenomenon of surprise. These conclusions then provide an explanation of how and why surprise occurs and the consequences when it occurs.

A synthesis of this theoretical work can be distilled in six key elements or concepts of surprise theory:

1. The force multiplying impact of surprise
2. Signal to noise ratio
3. The problem of misperception
4. Risk paradox
5. Deception
6. Criteria for measuring success in avoiding surprise

This short list does not represent a total listing of what causes surprise or every condition that results in surprise. Rather, it is a basic framework to help understand the complex subject of surprise. Even these six categories are far from simple and not totally discrete, but are more like an intricate web, each impacting on and relating to the other. A thorough understanding

of these theoretical concepts and their characteristics goes a long way towards an understanding of surprise.

THE FORCE MULTIPLYING IMPACT OF SURPRISE. Basic to an understanding of surprise and one key reason why this understanding is essential is its effect. Experts on surprise largely agree with Clausewitz when he said, "This desire [to take the enemy by surprise] is more or less basic to all operations..." and "Whenever it [surprise] is achieved on a grand scale, it confuses the enemy and lowers his morale; many examples great and small, show how this in turn multiplies the result."[1] It is this multiplication impact that makes surprise effective. More specifically, surprise will throw an enemy off balance and cause him to react rather than dictate terms of battle. Surprise can also rapidly reduce key nodes of command, control and communication and have a devastating effect on enemy attrition. Some theorists have actually quantified these effects using various measures. For instance, Barton Whaley concluded, using over 120 case studies, that achieving surprise increases the casualty ratio of enemy to friendly casualties from 1:1 to 5:1.[2]

This effect element of the theory of surprise is both the most simple and, consequently, the most widely understood. It is well appreciated in the U.S. Military, as illustrated by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Doctrine for Joint Operations, "Surprise is important for the joint force as it can decisively affect the outcome of battles. With surprise, success out of proportion to the effort expended may be obtained."[3]

SIGNAL TO NOISE RATIO. A second concept in the theory of surprise helps to explain why and how surprise occurs and involves intelligence and its flow. Since intelligence cannot be separated from the phenomenon of surprise, it is important, at this point, to have a basic understanding of the intelligence process. "Intelligence work can be divided into three distinct levels: acquisition (the collection of information); analysis (its evaluation); and acceptance (the readiness of politicians to make use of intelligence in the formulation of their policies)."[4] Impediments to this cycle of intelligence, quite logically, create the environment in which surprise can occur. One such impediment can be the level of noise in which an important piece of information on the enemy or signal is imbedded.

The problem of signal to noise ratio was first developed in this context by Roberta Wohlstetter in her book on Pearl Harbor. She explains six factors that combined to raise the noise level in 1941 and thereby contributed to the surprise on 7 December 1941. First of all, the noise level was raised by previous alerts and false warnings.[5] False warnings not only can increase noise through volume but can produce a "cry wolf syndrome" where accurate signals are more easily ignored. "The routinization of tension [through false alarms] desensitizes observers to the danger of imminent war."[6]

Secondly, continuous international tension raised the noise level by numbing reactions to danger through acclimation, since

danger was the normal condition. The next two barriers to signal flow (factors three and four) involve enemy, Japanese in this case, efforts to both keep his relevant signals quiet through security and secrecy, and by creating noise through false signals, i.e. the deliberate insertion of noise into the system, and elaborate "spoofs".[7]

A fifth contributor to this problem was that the relevant signals were subject to often and sudden change. Key technical information that affected the feasibility of a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor changed very quickly and often in intelligence estimates, thereby raising the level of noise.[8]

Finally, the efforts to maintain security of sensitive intelligence by U.S. personnel through compartmentation inhibited the flow of information. Key decision makers, consequently, did not have all the information available, and incorrectly assumed other decision makers had access to information they had, and were making judgements accordingly.[9]

Although discussed relatively specifically by Wohlstetter with respect to Pearl Harbor, it is evident that these ideas on the signal to noise problem are a universal impediment to the intelligence process. Further, by impeding the intelligence process, the signal to noise problem is, logically, one of the key elements of surprise theory.

THE MISPERCEPTION PROBLEM. The third key concept of surprise theory, misperception, is arguably one of the most complex and most universal causes of surprise. The dominance of

the misperception process by human nature and psychology and its impact on all three levels of the intelligence process help to explain both its complexity and pervasiveness.

At the beginning of this process is the requirement of statesmen and military leaders to develop images of other nations, their leaders, armed forces, and of their intentions.[10] These images of intention are essential to forecasting how a state will react in crisis. They may turn out to be incorrect for a variety of reasons that could include cultural differences, poor analysis, lack of information, the influence of the last war or other previous key event, etc. The importance of these incorrect images to the theory of surprise mainly lies, not with why they are incorrect, but with what can or usually happens to accurate incoming information, perhaps signals, when misperception exists. "The evidence from both psychology and history overwhelmingly supports the view...that decision makers tend to fit incoming information into their existing theories and images. Indeed their theories and images play a large part in determining what they notice."[11] Based on misperceptions "there is a tendency in our planning to confuse the unfamiliar with the improbable. The contingency we have not considered looks strange; what looks strange is thought improbable; what is improbable need not be considered seriously."[12]

The dilemma of how "open" to be to new information that refutes existing perceptions is not easily solvable. In the arena of politics and war, most information received almost

always permits several interpretations. If decision makers are confident of their view of a situation, whether accurate or not, it is logical and expected that information contrary to this view will be required "to meet higher standards of evidence and to pass stricter tests to gain acceptance than new information that supports existing expectations and hypotheses."[13]

This problem is further exacerbated when the political costs or dangers in responding to a change in an established view are high. In these instances, the higher standards required to support opposing views are subconsciously or deliberately raised.[14]

How this complex process affects surprise is not difficult to see. By providing a mechanism or environment in which certain signals can be ignored, explained away, or kept in the noise, the misperception process becomes a key and largely self enabling part of surprise.

RISK PARADOX. Another important aspect of the theory of surprise involves risk and the difficulty created by an enemy who is ready to take greater than the usual risk. "The idea that something 'cannot be done' is one of the main aids to surprise...Experts tend to forget that most military problems are solvable provided one is willing to pay the price."[15] Options that are considered extremely difficult, impossible, or irrational (costs greatly exceeding benefits) to one side may be seen radically different by the other side. "One man's irrationality is another man's risk."[16] Further, by viewing an

option as too difficult and discounting it, a decision maker can paradoxically make that option less risky for an opponent. This process is described by Michael Handel as his "Paradox no. 2" of surprise, "The greater the risk, the less likely it seems, and the less risky it actually becomes. Thus the greater the risk, the smaller it becomes."[17]

DECEPTION. An extremely important element of surprise theory is deception. Barton Whaley, in his exhaustive study on deception, describes it simply as the deliberate misleading of the victim.[18] He goes on to analyze deception as one of the factors lending to surprise and shows how, in the great majority of over 100 cases of war in the period 1914-1968, deception was associated with surprise.[19] Not only is deception associated with surprise, but it is very difficult to prevent. Whaley concludes from numerous case studies that "...the deceiver is almost always successful regardless of the sophistication of his victim in the same art. On the face of it, this seems an intolerable conclusion, one offending common sense. Yet it is the irrefutable conclusion of the historical evidence."[20]

CRITERIA FOR MEASURING SUCCESS IN AVOIDING SURPRISE. The last element of surprise theory deals with a paradox in avoiding surprise. If a nation correctly interprets signals and responds in time accordingly with defensive preparations and threats of retaliation, the attacker may decide to cancel the operation. In this case, what actually is success both in interpretation of a situation and reaction, could very likely be undistinguishable

from a failure to correctly read an opponent and a wasted posturing of defenses.[21]

It is not difficult to see how this process and being at the mercy of the attacker's option to change his plans can affect surprise. If the cost of action is high for decision makers, and it usually is, the inability to effectively determine and measure success can induce complacency and a reluctance for future action.[22]

CHAPTER III

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL SURPRISE IN THE KOREAN WAR

Three major surprises that occurred in the Korean War will be examined in light of the theoretical discussion above. These are: the invasion of South Korea in June 1950; the landing of United Nations Forces at Inchon in September 1950; and the intervention of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Army in November 1950. These events will be examined in the context of each of the concepts of the theory of surprise.

THE FORCE MULTIPLYING IMPACT OF SURPRISE. The strategic surprises of the initial invasion by North Korea and PRC intervention, and the operational surprises of Inchon and PRC Army actions all achieved enormous successes, successes that could indeed be seen as "out of proportion to the effort expended."

The initial invasion of 25 June 1950, was dramatically successful. On 28 June Communist tanks entered Seoul. By early August South Korean and American troops had been overrun across the south despite U.S. air strikes. By about mid-August the North Koreans had reached their culminating point of victory as a frantic race between the Communist advance and United Nation's troop build-up ended at the Pusan Perimeter. Pusan was all that was left of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and, therefore, all that stopped total Communist control of the Korean peninsula.[1]

The Communist forces were caught completely by surprise by the landing of U.S. Marines and Army forces at Inchon in September 1950. The operational surprise that was critical to this landing was successfully achieved as evidenced by the lack of reinforcement of the small number of North Korean troops garrisoning the area. Once this local surprise was achieved, the dramatic military success of this operation not only broke the stalemate at the Pusan Perimeter, but put the enemy in full retreat, a retreat that threw the invaders against their frontier with China in only six weeks. The strategic consequences of this great operational success were, of course, not all positive as within a matter of weeks the Chinese had entered the war. However, it is clear that surprise was vital to this operation and that surprise aided in achieving great success.[2] General MacArthur said, "Surprise is the most vital element for success in war."[3] " ...it [the Inchon operation] represents the only hope of wresting the initiative from the enemy and thereby presenting the opportunity for a decisive blow."[4]

The Chinese entry in the Korean War in October and November 1950, caught the United States Government and Military totally by surprise. Again, the results were devastating. When the Chinese attacked on 26 November along the entire Korean front with a huge 300,000 man "volunteer" army that it had secretly moved across the Yalu River, the consequences of the surprise to United Nation's Forces were immediate. "Within days it became clear, in MacArthur's words that "we face an entirely new war."[5] Entire

ROK divisions simply disappeared. U.S. forces across the country were in full retreat. Some, like the First Marine Division, were able to conduct an orderly retreat, inflicting heavy losses on the Chinese. Others, like the Second Army Division, "crumbled into small groups of desperate men."[6] At the front, throughout December, the morale collapse of the Eighth Army was complete and on 4 January 1951, the South Korean capital, Seoul, changed hands for a third time. It was not until February that the Communist offensive came to a grinding halt in the vicinity of the 38th parallel.

SIGNAL TO NOISE RATIO. The problem of separating signal from noise was evident, to some degree, in all three of the instances of surprise in the Korean Case. The intelligence process was impeded by an increase in the noise level as explained by the six factors described earlier. Brief illustrations of each of these factors are of interest.

1. Previous alerts and warnings, False warnings of a North Korean invasion had been common in 1949 and early 1950. Secretary of Defense Johnson testified after the surprise invasion at the Senate MacArthur hearings, that intelligence sources "cried wolf" so often before June 1950 that nothing in the reports at that time "put us on notice that anything was going to happen in Korea."[7]

In the instance of the surprise Chinese invasion, explicit warnings were ignored, in part, because previous, incorrect intelligence predictions of a Chinese invasion of Formosa were

incorrectly associated by U.S. decision makers with the Korean situation.[8]

2. International tension. President Truman best illustrates this factor and how it raised the noise level when he said, "The North Koreans were capable of such an attack [full scale] at any time according to the intelligence, but there was no information to give any clue as to whether the attack was certain or when it was likely to come. But this did not apply alone to Korea. These same reports also told me repeatedly that there were any number of other spots in the world where the Russians "possessed the capability" to attack."[9]

3. Enemy security and secrecy. The best example of this factor in the Korean Case is with the PRC Army movement across the Yalu. Once the Chinese Government decided to interfere, they discontinued their diplomatic warnings, moved their army only at night, and carefully concealed themselves during daytime rests in hills and under village rooftops. This security and secrecy successfully avoided aerial detection by U.N. Forces.[10] Additionally, it kept the confusion and noise level of U.S. decision makers regarding Chinese intentions at high levels.

4. False signals. Prior to the initial invasion in June, the North Koreans employed this technique to increase the noise and confusion levels. "To mask their intentions during the final preparations for invasion, the North Koreans perpetrated a simple ruse. They momentarily adopted a more conciliatory posture by

halting their border raids and, from 10 through 19 June, issued "peace proposals" calling for a single national election."[11]

5. Often and sudden change of signals. Specific examples of this factor are less numerous than the others. However, one possibility involves the difference of opinion on North Korean People's Army (NKPA) capabilities between the U.S. Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) and the U.S. Ambassador in Seoul, John J. Muccio. The dominant KMAG estimate was that the ROK Army was a match for the NKPA. However, "on June 9, 1950, Ambassador Muccio submitted a statement to Congress that contained an estimate of relative Korean capabilities sharply in variance with the prevailing consensus."[12] Although the Ambassador was correct, the noise created by the disagreement more than likely masked the importance of his estimate.

6. Security of friendly intelligence. The problem of compartmentation does not seem to have been a factor in the Korean Case. The decision makers involved in the key decisions had access to the essential elements of intelligence regarding Korea and China.

THE PROBLEM OF MISPERCEPTION. In the Korean Case, this was the dominant element of the theory that led to the surprises of June and October/November, 1950. Grand misperceptions of the actions and foreign policies of the Soviet Union and PRC can be directly traced to these surprises.

The basic assumption of U.S. foreign policy in June, 1950 was proven wrong by the invasion. "This assumption was that the

Kremlin was not now ready, and would not be ready for some years, to risk world war."[13] The general U.S. attitude was, therefore, that if Korea was important to U.S. interests Russia would understand this, control its ally, North Korea, and the danger of invasion was, consequently, low. In addition to these basic misconceptions of Soviet unwillingness to risk world war, U.S. decision makers were "preconditioned by the official belief that any war in 1950 (although unlikely) would be an all-out affair involving the Soviet Union."[14] The idea of a war of limited goals, means, or geography was not considered. In Asia the belief, which had been supported by previous North Korean actions, was that subversion was the only threat, not massive invasion. These two basic misperceptions, as the theory predicts, caused decision makers to ignore valid warnings of an impending invasion.

With the Chinese invasion of Korea, misperceptions involved both the intentions and capabilities of the Chinese. The capabilities misperception is more clear and will be examined first. When President Truman and his key advisors met with General MacArthur and his staff on 15 October 1950, on Wake Island, MacArthur told the President three times that the Chinese Communists would not attack. He went on to say that in the unlikely event they did intervene, the Chinese might be able to get fifty to sixty thousand men at most into Korea. Additionally, since they had no air force, "if the Chinese tried to get down to Pyongyang, there would be the greatest

slaughter."[15] This comment on capabilities, number of troops, and impact of no air force reflects the hubris of General MacArthur and was based on a misconception resulting from poor intelligence that the Chinese Army was similar to the North Korean Army which was heavy, slow moving, mostly day-fighting. In fact, the PRC Army was virtually the opposite type of army. They covertly moved large numbers of their 300,000 troops known to be in Manchuria, despite U.S. air superiority and reconnaissance. This misperception of capabilities caused U.S. forces to ignore numerous debriefings of Chinese POW's accurately describing troop concentrations in South Korea in late October and early November. It further caused General MacArthur to blindly launch his "end of the war" offensive on 24 November into the "teeth" of the Chinese Army still believing he was facing a small, easily defeatable force.[16]

The misperception of Chinese intentions was equally disastrous. It centered on the narrow, traditional, and very wishful view that U.S. troops would only elicit Chinese Government reaction if they directly threatened the hydro-electric complexes on the Yalu River. This misperception enabled U.S. and U.N. decision makers to pursue their now unlimited policy objectives regarding North Korea and unification of Korea believing major confrontation with China was avoidable with only minor military constraints.[17] This misperception additionally enabled surprise of the U.S. despite numerous, specific verbal warnings from the Chinese beginning on 26 August regarding their

position on the threat posed by U.S. forces to their security and culminating in the famous warning of 1 October. At midnight on 1 October 1950 Chou-En-Lai, the Chinese Foreign Minister, summoned the Indian Ambassador, K. M. Panikkar, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and declared that should U.S. troops invade North Korean territory, China would enter the war.[18] This message was received by the State Department, the President, and General MacArthur on 3 October, along with similar reports from Moscow, Stockholm, and London.[19] Contrary to what General MacArthur stated after the Chinese invasion, that political intelligence had failed to warn of Chinese intentions,[20] the actual case was that the intelligence and warnings were, quite simply, not believed or disregarded by U.S. decision makers.

RISK PARADOX. One of the premier illustrations of the risk paradox element of surprise theory is the Inchon landing and is best described by General MacArthur, himself. "The very arguments you have made as to the impracticabilities involved will tend to ensure for me the element of surprise. For the enemy commander will reason that no one would be so brash as to make such an attempt."[21]

DECEPTION. The Korean Case illustrates how deception is not a necessary condition for surprise as deception was not really an essential ingredient to any of the surprises. It was most evident in the Inchon operation with some feints at other possible landing sites, particularly Kunsan, and some limited naval bombardment of several sites in conjunction with

bombardment of Inchon. However, these efforts were largely unsophisticated and, although difficult to evaluate their effectiveness, probably not required for surprise.[22]

CRITERIA FOR MEASURING SUCCESS IN AVOIDING SURPRISE. This problem of measuring success and distinguishing success from failure is not at all evident in the Korean Case or in the foreign policy actions of the United States preceding the Korean War. While this concept of theory logically seems valid, finding instances of successful avoidance of surprise attack to verify it could prove difficult. This difficulty, in and of itself, helps to illustrate this problem of determining success.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

> "Surprise, when it happens to a government, is likely to be a complicated, diffuse, bureaucratic thing. It includes neglect of responsibility, but also responsibility so poorly defined or so ambiguously delegated that action gets lost. It includes gaps in intelligence, but also intelligence that, like a string of pearls too precious to wear, is too sensitive to give to those who need it. It includes the alarm that fails to work, but also the alarm that goes off so often it has been disconnected. It includes the unalert watchman, but also the one who knows he'll be chewed out by his superior if he gets higher authority out of bed. It includes the contingencies that occur to no one, but also those that everyone assumes somebody else is taking care of. It includes straightforward procrastination, but also decisions protracted by internal disagreement. It includes, in addition, the inability of individual human beings to rise to t e occasion until they are sure it *is* the occasion - which is usually too late."[1]

After examining the theory of surprise and verifying this theory with the Korean Case, there are some pertinent conclusions that can be drawn. As the statement above illustrates, the complexity of this subject is noteworthy. It is complex because of the dynamic interaction of politics and human nature. Intentions and even capabilities can often be masked by a variety of deliberate and unintentional processes, despite the availability of accurate information. An enemy warning or action that seemed to signal his intent so clearly in hindsight, can be

very ambiguous to the decision makers on the spot dealing with the situation.

Secondly, by its very nature, surprise is not a transient event. The conditions that enabled the surprises of the Korean War fit a theory heavily laced with the enduring conditions of human nature and psychology. It is therefore a theory that is applicable for today and the future, and is part and parcel of all wars. It is also theory not invalidated by multi-billion dollar information gathering and processing systems because of its human dimensions. The evidence gathered from the study of surprise is contrary to what Clausewitz said, "It is very rare therefore that one state surprises another, either by an attack or by preparations for war."[2] It is also contrary to much contemporary thinking. "Such extensive surveillance will make it more difficult for nations to prepare for war or mount a surprise attack."[3] From this analysis it is clear that the conditions that enabled surprise in the past will be present in the future.

Given these basic conclusions, the necessary question to examine is what to do about this problem of surprise? More specific questions are: How can surprise be prevented in the future? If surprised what can be done to minimize the effects? How best can surprise be achieved and exploited? Possible answers to each of these questions will be discussed by providing some suggested recommendations for dealing with the surprise problem first on the strategic/political level and then on the operational level.

STRATEGIC/POLITICAL ANSWERS. The experts on surprise theory and the military surprises of the past are not optimistic on avoiding strategic surprise in the future. Ephraim Kam concluded, "History does not encourage potential victims of surprise attack. One can only hope to reduce its severity - to be only partly surprised..."[4]

Michael Handel reached a similar conclusion and wrote:

> "The study of strategic surprise can be rather disappointing for those who have always assumed a better theoretical understanding of the subject at hand would logically lead to the discovery of more effective practical means to anticipate strategic surprise and alleviate its impact. Thus far in its application to the real world , improved insight into the causes and pattern of strategic surprise has made only a negligible contribution to the search for ways to warn off a sudden attack in an accurate and timely fashion. If anything, the scrutiny of this phenomenon in recent years has chiefly served to explain why surprise is almost unavoidable - and will continue to be so in the foreseeable future - despite all efforts to the contrary."[5]

While this study of surprise theory and the Korean War does tend to point to the same pessimistic answers, there are two actions that could possibly, partially reduce the probability of surprise in the future. The first is awareness. Having never previously studied the theory of surprise in a 22 year U.S. Naval career that included two tours at the Naval War College, I can tentatively conclude that there is plenty of room to increase awareness in the U.S. Military. Increased emphasis on surprise theory in the Strategy and Policy Curriculum at the Naval War College is called for, and is a recommendation that my advisor

and I can act on. Additionally, heightened awareness of this theory at higher levels of decision making could provide the incentive to be the "devil's advocate", see a situation in the context of the surprise theory, and recommend a response out of mainstream thinking that could deter enemy action in a crisis.

A second possible, but again only partial, solution to this problem involves increasing the rigidity of decision making when responses are considered. The establishment of specific conditions or "trip wires" in areas vital to the United States that trigger automatic responses could mitigate some of the psychological dimensions of surprise theory that cause ambiguity. One difficulty with this solution is where to set the "trip wires." If set too low, the high costs of more frequent responses and the problem of determination of success, previously discussed, are significant. If "trip wires" are set too high, as illustrated, perhaps, with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the time to respond could be insufficient. To help minimize the costs, both political and monetary, of moving on ambiguous warning or "trip wires" to deter possible crisis, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Frank B. Kelso II, was correct when he recently stated that the forces required for these situations are naval (USN/USMC) or light, highly mobile army.[6] In any case, the surprise theory and history indicate these recommendations can only be successful in preventing surprise "on the margins."

If surprised what can be done to minimize the effects? At the strategic level, possible answers to this question include:

having a force structure and strategy that require fewer shifts from a peacetime posture to combat; maintaining forces and facilities forward to reduce the time to respond to a surprise attack; and have strategies generally available that consider possible surprises and consequences in areas of vital interest. Each of these elements, to varying degrees, is evident in the current National Military Strategy of the United States.

How to achieve and exploit surprise on the strategic level is a very interesting question for the U.S. The nature of U.S. foreign policy and government make it unlikely and difficult to initiate war, be it by surprise or not. However, the recent war with Iraq was the exception to this trend and illustrated the concepts of surprise theory. It further illustrated that the way to exploit strategic surprise is with a bold campaign plan and the forces to execute it. However, a thorough understanding of surprise theory is required to appreciate that surprise will quickly achieve results well out of proportion to the effort expended. A further realization of how this success may affect war termination, political goals, etc. must be considered in advance if the strategic mistakes of the past are to be avoided.

OPERATIONAL ANSWERS. Solutions for avoiding surprise at the operational level are similar to the strategic, and again will only provide partial success because of the nature of the problem. An understanding of the problem and its implications for the operational level of war is required. Inclusion of education on surprise theory and the limitations of operational

intelligence in decision making should be included in the Joint Operations Curriculum at the Naval War College.

Another method to help avoid surprise is with a decentralized command structure. The events leading to surprise can occur with great speed at the operational level, requiring great flexibility for the operational commander if he is to respond to avoid surprise. Again, these solutions or recommendations can only be expected to improve the likelihood of avoiding surprise marginally, indicating that most effort should be placed in answering the next two questions.

If surprised what can be done to minimize the effects? The suggested answers to this question are more definitive, but not new. In order to have and prepare forces that can survive a surprise attack and rebound quickly, the following items are recommended: plans and operational doctrine that anticipate surprise by planning for counterattack and opposed entry through maneuver, boldness, initiative, and flexibility; a decentralized command structure that allows the field commander to act quickly and decisively; robust and redundant command and control nodes, as these are likely to be early targets; similarly, hardened storage facilities for key combat equipment. The U.S. Marine Corps focus in FMFM-1 and the U.S. Army focus in its new doctrine seem to be in keeping with this list. The availability of equipment and facilities mentioned above that match these doctrines is another question and beyond the scope of this paper.

How best can operational surprise be achieved and exploited? There is emphasis in U.S. Joint, Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Space Doctrine on the importance of surprise as a principle of war. Additionally, as the Korean Case and recent history have shown, the types of forces most capable of achieving surprise are the highly mobile ones. The flexibility of USN/USMC forces and the mobility of the U.S. Army are well suited to achieving surprise.

The thorough exploitation of surprise is another question. Again, U.S. Forces seem well suited to exploiting surprise. However, service doctrines appear to require further discussion on the likely effects of surprise, how they relate to quickly achieving Clausewitz's Culminating Point of Victory[7], and the implications of attaining this culminating point. This discussion can help to ensure the thorough and efficient exploitation of surprise.

NOTES

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6. Richard K. Betts, Surprise Attack, Lessons for Defense Planning (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1982), p. 95.

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8. Ibid., p. 394.

9. Ibid.

10. Robert Jervis, "Hypotheses on Misperception," World Politics, No. 2, January 1968, p. 454.

11. Ibid., p. 455.

12. Thomas C. Schelling, from the Foreword, Wohlstetter, p. vii.

13. Betts, p. 123.

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16. Rees, pp. 145-150.

17. Betts, Surprise Attack, p. 56.

18. Whiting, p. 108.

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20. DeWeerd, p. 450.

21. Rees, p. 82.

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